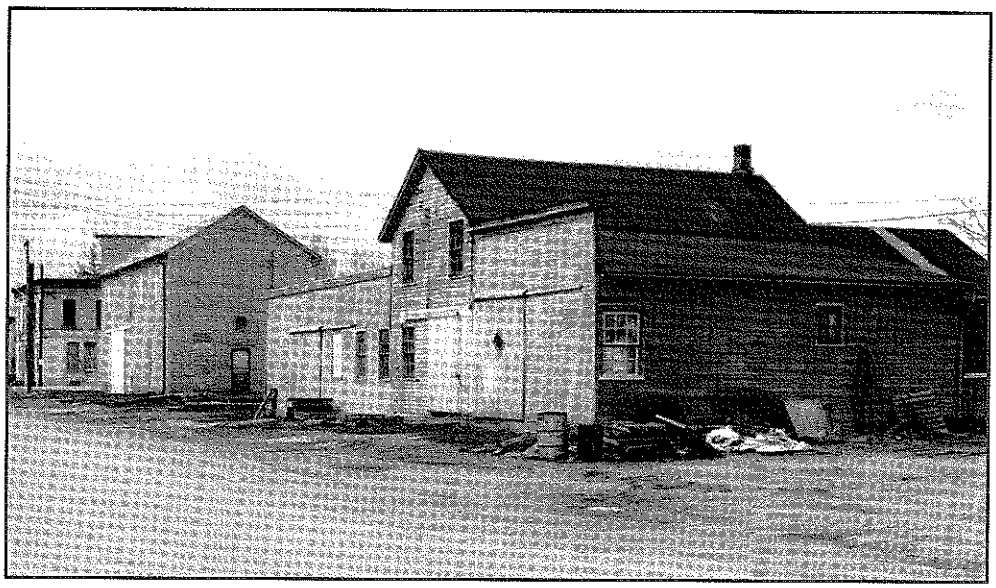
Chapter Three
BEGINNING THE SURVEY



Streetscape, Fowler

Documenting historic resources, describing historic architecture, and researching the general historic background of the survey area, historic themes pertinent to it, and the histories of specific properties are fundamental components of an above-ground survey. Evaluations of the significance of surveyed properties are dependent on accurate descriptions and thorough research.

This manual provides standardized survey methodologies for documenting above-ground resources, designed to provide an adequate level of documentation for informed decision-making about historic significance. Survey projects generally comprise nine basic tasks within four primary work components. They are:

Field Work

- Recording locational and descriptive data on each property
- Photographing properties and context views
- Mapping properties' locations

Research

- Researching the survey area's general history and historic themes
- Researching the histories of individual properties

Evaluation

- Evaluating the significance of each property
- Identifying and documenting potential historic districts

Report Preparation

- Completing Ruskin records
- Preparing a survey report

The survey project needs to be organized to perform these tasks in a logical and efficient sequence. There is no one "right" order for carrying out these tasks. Typically, the field work is begun near the outset of the project. The weeks just before the foliage comes out in the spring and just after it drops in the fall tend to be the best for survey photography. Surveying in the winter should be avoided, if possible, because snow, on the one hand, and harsh contrasts of light and shadow on sunny days, on the other, obscure important details in the properties being surveyed. In the summer, abundant foliage on older residential streets can force the photographer to play peekaboo with the properties being surveyed and prevent photographs from being shot that adequately depict them. ***Survey sponsors should plan their projects to provide adequate time frames so that survey photography can be performed during the optimal seasons.***

Researching the survey area and community's early history and historic themes is generally begun at an early stage in the project, and performing this research at the beginning of the project, even before the field survey work, has the benefit of helping the surveyors understand the physical development of the survey area and the history the surveyed properties represent and illustrate. Research into the histories of individual properties generally follows the field survey work. The evaluation process, identification and documentation of any complex properties and districts, and report preparation are the last tasks to be completed.

A primary product of the survey is a detailed record for each of the surveyed properties. The SHPO's Ruskin electronic survey database program provides a format for recording and presenting data on historic properties that will provide adequate information for evaluating the historic significance of the surveyed properties. Ruskin can be used with standard photography or electronic imaging. The program is available free of charge from the SHPO. System requirements and instructions for the use of Ruskin will be found in Appendix A.

BEGINNING FIELD WORK

An important early step is to obtain maps of the survey area that can serve both to locate properties for purposes of the field survey and as base maps for creating the final set of survey maps. The more detailed the maps, the more useful they will be both from the standpoint of precisely locating the surveyed resources and assisting users of the survey materials in their comprehension of the survey area's historic resources. In cities and villages, maps illustrating all streets and current property lines and/or building outlines may be available from municipal offices or, perhaps, from regional

planning agencies. Where this is not the case, the possible use of Sanborn or other fire insurance maps should be investigated. It might be possible to scan these maps and annotate them to serve as survey maps. In some cases useable base maps may not be available, and it may be up to the surveyors to create maps from scratch.

For more rural areas, county and township governments may be able to provide township maps illustrating tax parcels, but United States Geological Survey (USGS) maps — the most current 7.5 minute series maps should be used — and township maps from county plat books may be the only available base maps in many cases. It may also be possible to use aerial photographs in creating computer-generated maps.

At the outset of the survey, the surveyors should develop a strategy for covering the area to be surveyed that makes the process as efficient as possible while ensuring that all appropriate properties are surveyed. Confusion and back-tracking can be avoided if streets and roads are traversed in a logical order. There is no formula that works for all survey areas, but each survey should begin with a "plan of attack" in mind. Sometimes, as the streets are traversed, another method proves to be more efficient, and the surveyors should be open to changing tactics.

Surveyors recording site specific data or taking photographs should always be on foot. Never attempt to do these tasks from an automobile. This holds true for all survey areas, rural, urban, and suburban. Each property can be seen at a closer range and in greater detail, and the photographer will have the ability to pick the best viewpoints for photographs. Surveyors usually find it convenient to drive a car to a strategic point, walk within range of it, then move the car farther on.

Two people usually can do a survey much more efficiently than one. The pair will develop a method to share the tasks that suits them, but, generally, if one person is taking photographs the other can be recording data and mapping. The division of labor will depend on whether both field workers are qualified, or if one is an assistant being supervised by the qualified surveyor.

RECORDING DATA IN THE FIELD

Field survey is the first step in creating a complete record for each surveyed property. Field survey will provide locational and descriptive information, and perhaps some historical background obtained by informants encountered while surveying, about each property that will ultimately form part of the record for the property. Prior to beginning work, surveyors should review the list of fields or data categories and the instructions for each in the Ruskin manual. They should especially review the instructions and pick lists for those fields that can only or best be completed during the field survey stage of the survey project. The appropriate fields to use in the field survey will generally be the following:

- Address fields (number, direction, street)
- City/Village or Township (if survey includes more than one)
- Survey Date and Surveyor
- Historic Name/Common Name
- Date Built
- Architectural Style
- Descriptive Notes
- Other Buildings/Features
- History
- Comments
- Photo Info (roll and frame number and/or electronic image file number)

Using the Ruskin program during the field survey phase is *not* recommended. Using Ruskin for field data gathering will be cumbersome, and also time-consuming, because of the need to cursor down through a series of screens for each property surveyed. The car dependency resulting from using a laptop computer in the field to store the Ruskin data will also tend to inhibit surveyors from making the thorough inspections of properties that can only be made on foot.

Surveyors typically use paper survey forms and clipboards for the field survey and enter the data into Ruskin later. For maximum efficiency, the paper form should be set up with the appropriate fields and following the sequence of the Ruskin screens and fields. **See Appendix C for a sample field form you may reproduce.**

Another possible field data recordation technique

involves the use of a portable, hand-held data recorder such as is used for taking inventory in grocery stores and by building inspectors on their inspections. For such devices to be useful, they should possess the following capabilities:

- Ability to translate data from the recorder into Ruskin or into Access for conversion into Ruskin;
- Ability to use pick lists to improve the speed and accuracy of data collection; and
- Flexibility to allow for the entry of field notes.

DEVELOPING RUSKIN PROPERTY RECORDS

The data gathered in the field survey will be used to create *property records* in the Ruskin survey database program for all of the surveyed properties, including complex properties and districts. Each property record in Ruskin consists of a series of fields on seven screens.

Property records constitute the basic written documentation of surveyed properties. Each record will contain locational, descriptive, and historical information, as well as an evaluation of the property's historic significance.

A separate *property record* should be created for each of the following types of surveyed properties:

- Individual, single-resource properties, such as a house standing alone on its property;
- Individual components of complex properties, such as residential properties with components in addition to the main house, estates, farms, mill and factory complexes, church complexes, cemeteries, and parks (see the discussion on surveying garages under **COMPLEX PROPERTIES** in the **WHAT PROPERTIES TO SURVEY** section of Chapter 2);
- Each complex or district as a whole.

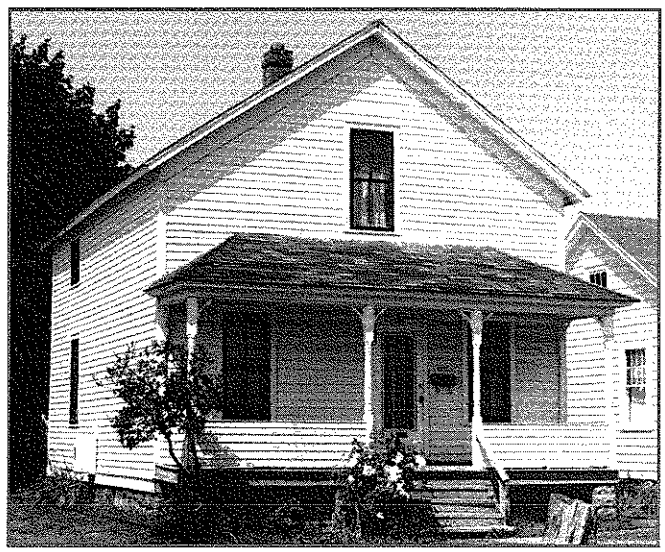
See Appendix A for instructions for operating Ruskin and completing the Ruskin fields.

PHOTOGRAPHING PROPERTIES

Every property included in the survey, including each building and other surveyed feature in a complex property or district, requires at a minimum one high quality image that shows as much of the property as possible. To maximize coverage in one view, photos should be taken from an oblique angle, far enough away to provide some sense of setting, but close enough for architectural or other details to show. Photographs should be clear enough to show a building's siding material distinctly.

For complex properties and districts, depending on their size and complexity, one or more general site or streetscape views should be provided (see **COMPLEX PROPERTIES** section of **WHAT PROPERTIES TO SURVEY** in Chapter 2). Generally, for complex properties and districts containing:

- 20-50 properties, 4-10 general site or streetscape views should be shot (in addition to the image for each property).
- 50-250 properties, 4-15 general site or streetscape views should be shot (in addition to the image for each property).



All praise to the photographer! Sharp details, front and side illustrated, sunlight on both facades, no perspective distortion.

- 250-1000 properties or more, 15-30 general site or streetscape views should be shot (in addition to the image for each property).

Suggestions for Improving Photography

- The view should depict the entire resource; cutting off the top of the roof or one end of the building should be avoided, if possible.
- Perspective distortion should be minimized. The camera should be held as close to level as possible. Avoid using a wide-angle lens unless it can be held level. If possible, use a perspective corrective (PC) lens.
- Avoid photographing directly into the sun and also photographing when the property is in deep shadow. It is often necessary to shoot opposite sides of the street at different times of the day to obtain good quality images of all of the properties.
- Avoid signs, cars, people, trees, and poles in the foreground, as much as possible.
- Lens filters and shields should be used to minimize glare.
- Use imagination in finding the position that will allow the best view of the property.

More tips on survey photography can be found in National Register Bulletin 23, *How to Improve the Quality of Photos for National Register Nominations*, available from the SHPO.

Photography Procedures

Most government and planning agencies, including the SHPO, are moving toward the development of electronic photo-image databases. The use of an electronic format should facilitate future use of the data by these agencies and may facilitate the survey process. Thus, the SHPO recommends that surveyors consider the use of electronic photo-imaging, fully understanding that obtaining a clear image using a reasonable amount of storage space is a complex issue. Electronic photo-imaging is useful as a substitute for standard photographs, *if the images provide the same level of detail and clarity that good-quality photographs provide.*

Photographs can be taken in the field by standard photography or electronic imaging. The photo-images can be submitted in standard photographic print or electronic image format, or in both formats.

The following considerations should govern the choice of medium for the survey photo-images:

- Standard Prints: Because of the long-term possibility of fading, color film should not be used. A fine-grain black-and-white film, such as Kodak Plus-X or Tri-X, should be used to provide the best detail.
- Electronic Images using a digital camera: Color images are highly desirable. The use of electronic imaging avoids the problem of color fading; thus color images from electronic imaging are preferred.
- Electronic Images from scanning standard photographs: The consideration here is what will be done with the negatives and prints once the photographs are scanned. If it is intended that the original negatives and prints will be retained and permanently housed in an appropriate local repository — and this should always be the plan — the concern about color film and prints fading should be the determining factor in whether to use color or black-and-white film.

Standards for Electronic Images from Scanned Photographs

Electronic images from scanned photographs should meet the following standards:

- Format: TIF, uncompressed, or BMP
- Pixels per inch: 150 ppi for 4" x 6" photographs, 300 ppi for 2" x 3" photographs
- Media: CD-ROM, ZIP or JAZ disk
- Image file naming: see Appendix A, the Ruskin manual, section VI

Standards for Electronic Images from Digital Cameras

- Format: JPG
- Image size: 1280 x 960
- Media: CD-ROM, ZIP or JAZ disk
- Image file naming: see Appendix A, the Ruskin manual, section VI

Standards for Traditional Black and White Photography

The following photography standards apply to surveys utilizing traditional photography:

- Film: Use a fine-grain 35 mm black-and-white film, such as Plus-X, Tri-X, or T-Max.
- Prints: Black-and-white glossy prints, printed on photographic paper intended for black and white rather than color prints. Prints must be either 2" x 3" or 3" x 5" in size.
- Film Codes: Each roll of film in the survey is assigned a number, beginning with one. To avoid future confusion when dealing with many rolls of film, a good procedure is to use the first frame of each roll to photograph a piece of paper on which the roll number and date have been written. As photos are taken, each property is assigned a photo code, comprised of the roll number and frame number (separated by a colon). If more than one photograph of a property is taken, all photo codes for that property should be recorded on the field form and, later, in the Ruskin property record.
- Processing: The SHPO's preference is for film to be developed into 2 x 3 inch prints but, if they are impossible to obtain, 3 x 5 inch prints are acceptable. The number of prints made of each view depends on how many agencies or repositories are to receive original copies of the survey results.

It is important for surveyors and photographers to develop a strategy for matching the survey images to the surveyed properties. A simple but commonly used technique is for the surveyor to note on the field form, in addition to the street address, some distinctive feature that would appear in the image — an unusual characteristic of a building, a current store name emblazoned on the building, even a big nasty dog in the foreground snarling at the photographer — anything that will help clarify the property to which the image relates. If the surveyor and photographer work together at each site, it will be a simple matter, when standard photography is used, for the surveyor to record the roll and frame number on the field form. Electronic images should be downloaded frequently, ideally once or twice each day, and saved and named as per the instructions in Appendix A, the Ruskin manual, section VI.

See Chapter 7 for a discussion of how prints and negatives should be stored and where they should be deposited.

MAPPING SURVEYED PROPERTIES

The location of surveyed properties must be noted on maps that are prepared as part of the survey process. Properties are identified on maps by street addresses; if the properties have numbered street addresses, no other identification should appear on the maps. If there are no street addresses, a simple numerical system should be devised that follows some logical, easily retrievable order, such as by streets north to south or by block. Where most properties have visible street addresses, but a few do not, the surveyor should make every effort to obtain the addresses from the property owners, a municipal office, or fire insurance maps. If an address cannot be obtained, one should be assigned by reference to the addresses of adjoining properties. The address is entered at the approximate location of the property on the map. Assigned addresses should be placed in brackets.

Base maps should be selected or developed to meet the information standards set forth in the **MAPS** section of Chapter 7. Clean copies of the base maps used for the field work may serve as the basis for the final maps or the mapping may be computer-generated. If more than one map is needed to cover the survey area, a key map should illustrate the entire survey area and its boundaries.

DESCRIBING HISTORIC PROPERTIES

Architecture should be described using appropriate terminology for architectural styles, building forms, and other characteristics. Surveyors should make use of architectural style guides, studies of specific building types, and other source material that provide background information about the architecture they are surveying. Many helpful sources are listed in the SHPO's *History of Michigan's Architecture and Landscapes: A Select Reading List* (1996). The following sources of information should prove useful for nearly every survey:

- **Architectural Dictionaries and Terminology Guides:**

  Burden, Ernest. *Illustrated Dictionary of Architecture.* NY: McGraw-Hill, 1998. Burden and Harris (below) are both especially useful because so many of the terms are illustrated.

  Gottfried, Herbert, and Jan Jennings. *American Vernacular Design, 1870-1940.* Ames, IA: Iowa State University Press, 1988. The extensive elements section, illustrating structural and decorative components, will prove very useful for most surveys, while the shorter building types section is less useful because many of the type names are not widely accepted.

  Harris, Cyril M. *Illustrated Dictionary of Historic Architecture.* NY: Dover Publications, 1977.

- **Houses:**

  Gowans, Alan. *The Comfortable House: North American Suburban Architecture, 1890-1930.* Cambridge, MA: M. I. T. Press, 1986.

  Lancaster, Clay. *The American Bungalow, 1880-1930.* NY: Dover Publications, Inc.,1995.

  McLennan, Marshall. "Common House Types in Southern Michigan." In *Michigan Folklife Reader*, edited by C. Kurt Dewhurst and Yvonne R. Lockwood, 15-45. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1987.

  Noble, Allen G. *Wood, Brick & Stone: The North American Settlement Landscape.* 2 vols. Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984. Volume 1 deals with houses.

  Peterson, Fred W. *Homes in the Heartland: Balloon Frame Farmhouses of the Upper Midwest, 1850-1920.* Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1992.

- **Farms and Agricultural Buildings:**

  Michigan Agricultural Experiment Station and Michigan Cooperative Extension Bulletins, found at the Michigan State University Undergraduate Library, contain useful background information on farm and building layouts and design.

  Noble, Allen G. *Wood, Brick & Stone: The North American Settlement Landscape.* 2 vols. Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984. Volume 2 deals with barns and farm structures.

  Noble, Allen G., and Hubert G. H. Wilhelm, eds. *Barns of the Midwest.* Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1995.

  Visser, Thomas Durant. *Field Guide to New England Barns and Farm Buildings.* Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1997.

- **Schools:**

  Michigan, State of; Superintendent of Public Instruction. *Annual Reports.* Lansing, MI; State of Michigan Superintendent of Public Instruction. The annual reports for 1859, 1864, 1869, 1893, 1913-14, 1915-16, and 1916-17 contain illustrated material on school building design and furnishings, including standard plans.

- **Commercial Architecture:** A manual that provides a very useful classification system for typical commercial buildings is:

  Longstreth, Richard. *The Buildings of Main Street: A Guide to American Commercial Architecture.* Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2000.

- **Industrial Architecture:**

  Bradley, Betsy Hunter. *The Works: The Industrial Architecture of the United States.* NY: Oxford University Press, 1999.

For specific questions concerning architectural terminology, contact the survey and designation staff of the SHPO.